

The Spread of Public Libraries:  
The Community of the Book in North Carolina, 1900-1960

["The Spread of Public Libraries: The Community of the Book in North Carolina, 1900-1960,"](#) *North Carolina Libraries* 54 (Fall 1996): 113-121 (outstanding *North Carolina Libraries* award, 1996-1997).

“Perhaps no deficiency in the Southeast is more marked than its lack of books and libraries and the consequent absence of reading habits.”

Howard W. Odum, *Southern Regions of the United States*, 1936.

Before there can be a community of the book, there must be books—and access to books. In 1900 public libraries were almost unknown in North Carolina. The state was rural and poor, and libraries of any and all sorts were few and far between.<sup>1</sup> There had been books in North Carolina almost since the first European settlers, but these were either religious collections or private. During the nineteenth century various communities had tried to establish literary societies and libraries, but they were short-lived. Even where continuing attempts were made to establish some form of library, as in Wilmington, they were not publicly governed or supported.<sup>2</sup> and the extensive files at the New Hanover Public Library, DB:PL 2. There were some fifteen different attempts to organize before the Wilmington Public Library opened in 1907. Such libraries were by their nature restricted libraries and the larger community ignored.<sup>3</sup> An ambitious and promising youngster might gain access to a wealthy neighbor's private collection, or to a college collection in the few places that had one, but for most people in North Carolina access to books beyond what one's family or church could afford was curtailed. Other than reading the Bible, the community of the book hardly existed.<sup>4</sup>

This paper will sketch the spread of public libraries in North Carolina. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has argued that democracy progresses best when there is a public forum for open communication.<sup>5</sup> Public libraries provide such an arena, in the sense of being repositories and disseminators of retrievable knowledge and that such knowledge underlies, for Habermas, “ideal speech situations” and democratic norms.<sup>6</sup> But for there to be any practical results from these forums there must be public libraries throughout the governing polity, in this case the state of North Carolina. For historians, on the other hand, the establishment of a public library is an index of community wealth, self-confidence and literacy. So it follows that studying the origin and development of public libraries can provide insight not only to a community's

openness to communication and the spread of democracy but also to local resources and attitudes.<sup>7</sup>

By the 1870s Wilmington and Asheville had the beginnings of viable subscription libraries which within a decade were relatively well-organized and substantial. A few other towns also laid claims to having libraries. Salisbury had a Library Association from 1877 to 1881, when it turned the collection over to the Y.M.C.A. In 1880 a box or boxes of books was brought south and the village of Highlands had the beginnings of the Hudson Library. Charles Hallett Wing, a retired professor, established a library in Ledger in 1886 or 1887 using 12,000 books discarded from the Boston Public Library.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1890s a few towns established quasi-public libraries of one sort or another. In 1890 New Bern had an active if small collection formed by the Whatsoever Circle of women which declined and was abandoned about 1902.<sup>9</sup> Professor Andrew L. Betts opened a “free circulating” library at his Beulah Academy in Madison. The Hickory Travelers Club started a subscription library in 1893 by purchasing a rental collection from a local businessman. A library was supposedly started in Franklin around 1890 “by a few school children.” In 1903 Goldsboro women started a collection with \$25 worth of books and four years later induced the city to appropriate some \$400 a year.<sup>10</sup> Typically in the 1890s and 1900s a group of town women would start a reading circle or subscription library which was then considered open to the public—or at least to proper white folk.<sup>11</sup> But true access to the public at large was restricted, and public funding and control of libraries non-existent.<sup>12</sup>

The city of Durham established the first tax-supported public library in North Carolina in 1897 with modest help from Julius Shakespeare Carr. But within a few years the librarian admitted it was in poor shape and in 1910 a field agent for the North Carolina Library Commission (NCLC) reported that the Durham Public Library was “in a perfectly awful condition.”<sup>13</sup> The next year, however, with the hiring of a professional librarian, Lilian Baker Griggs, the situation improved. In 1912 she reported a collection of 4,900 books and a circulation of 7,250 in a city with a white population of 11,372.<sup>14</sup> County residents began using it in 1914.<sup>15</sup>

The capital city of Raleigh was next to open a public library, indeed the budding rivalry between Durham and Raleigh contributed to a race between the two cities to create a library. But Raleigh’s 1896 campaign fell short. Philanthropy once more saved the day, through a far more generous benefaction than Durham enjoyed. Richard Raney donated \$40,000 for a library and

books in memory of his wife Olivia. The library opened in 1901 and by 1908 11,846 local citizens enjoyed 9,690 books which circulated 27,270 times.<sup>16</sup>

The twenty-eight public, society or Y.M.C.A. libraries listed in the state's first library report were Aberdeen (1907), Asheville (1879), Charlotte (1901), Durham (1897), Fayetteville (1908),<sup>17</sup> Franklin (1901), Gastonia (1904), Goldsboro (1907), Greensboro (1902), Greenville (1906),<sup>18</sup> Hickory (1906), Hillsboro (1910), Ledger (1886), Lenoir (?), McAdenville (1908), Montreat (1905), Mooresville (1897), New Bern (1906), Raleigh (1901), Reidsville (1909), Rutherford College (1907),<sup>19</sup> Saluda (1894), Spencer (1908), Statesville (1907), Wadesboro (1905), Wilmington (1907), and Winston-Salem (1905). Most of these were not, in fact, tax-supported public libraries and held an average of only 2,700 books each, which meant that some were very small indeed.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, the 1900s were the initial seed time for public library creation in North Carolina. Librarians and library supporters were full of hope and determined to accomplish mighty things.

First in any listing of North Carolina librarians must come that whirlwind of enthusiasm, intelligence, political acumen, publicity, and steadfastness, Louis Round Wilson.<sup>21</sup> The South's greatest librarian, he assumed direction of the library at the University of North Carolina in 1901, started North Carolina's first library school in 1931 and later was dean of the Graduate Library School at Chicago, served as president of the American Library Association in 1935-36, and finally retired full of honors in 1959. Wilson and Annie F. Petty of State Normal College, Greensboro, convinced the state to create the NCLC in 1909. Wilson served as Commission chairman until 1916, when Petty took the reins. In 1904 Wilson teamed with Petty and Annie Smith Ross of the Charlotte Public Library to establish the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA).<sup>22</sup> The community of the book, at least as far as librarians and libraries are concerned, was starting to come together.

An important aspect of library formation, already alluded to, was the role played by women groups, specifically the umbrella Federation of Women's Clubs. The public role of women was quite circumspect in the South, but charity and cultural work were encouraged.<sup>23</sup> After 1900 the Federation began encouraging the formation of local public libraries in North Carolina. Aware that most of the state was rural, the Federation also sent traveling libraries of books from town to town. Traveling libraries, with all the problems of coordination and local lending without a librarian, were not the solution.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, traveling and package libraries continued to circulate until after the Depression.

Municipal libraries continued to increase in numbers but had little impact beyond town borders. Since the state was still 81% rural in 1920, this limited their effectiveness. In 1917 the legislature permitted counties to contract with towns for library service, but counties could not themselves operate libraries until 1927. In 1920 there were 49 white municipal libraries and two for blacks. Thirty-five of the forty-nine white libraries were free and thirteen were subscription.<sup>25</sup> Greensboro, Charlotte and Durham were among the first to extend services to the county; significantly, all had strong librarians at their helm. As the former librarian at Charlotte and now state librarian, Mary B. Palmer, insisted in 1921 “the movement of county libraries [must] be pushed in every possible way.”<sup>26</sup> Raleigh did not extend county service until 1926. Even in 1928, residents of only fourteen counties could count on library service. Wilson pointed out to Griggs that “it should be made very clear that, while the beginning is a good one, the support is in no sense adequate and the personnel and book collections have not been built up as they should be.”<sup>27</sup> No county matched the \$1.00 per person standard for library service adopted by the American Library Association. The statewide average was only \$.04.<sup>28</sup> At least as far as public libraries went, there was little support for any community of the book.

In 1923 Dr. Wilson delivered a blast that shook the library community and, more importantly, stirred the populace at large. While attending a conference in Massachusetts, he discovered the Salem Public Library had more books than the total of the seven largest public libraries in North Carolina.<sup>29</sup> He vigorously called for remedial action. Out of the controversy rose the Citizens’ Library Movement (CLM), North Carolina’s most sustained campaign to increase the number of public libraries and enlarge their collections.

CLM suffered through a slow beginning. Then, without assuming formal control, Frank Porter Graham, President of the University of North Carolina, energized it and led the campaign for public library service. When he gave an oration at the opening of a new library in Greenville in 1930, for instance, Graham was “so inspiring that everyone wants to help develop their library.”<sup>30</sup> “Our civilization has reached the stage,” Governor O. Max Gardner intoned in 1929, “where it has needs which are distinctly above and beyond the bread and butter line of bare necessities.”<sup>31</sup> Partly as a result of this popular pressure, North Carolina had seventy-seven public libraries in 1936.<sup>32</sup> The CLM could point to the recent creation of libraries in Northampton and Granville counties as the result of long-sustained efforts by local women.<sup>33</sup>

Yet, as was true of most public services in the South, public libraries remained grossly underfunded, understaffed, and underbooked.<sup>34</sup> The Depression took a fearsome toll of library

budgets, to the degree that Charlotte lost its telephone. Although state tax revenues had yet to fall significantly, Graham wrote in 1930 to Wilson, then in London, that “the State of North Carolina has already become a State of Hysteria with regard to public expenditures.”<sup>35</sup> County and municipal funding for public libraries declined. Nonetheless, “librarians used their ingenuity to serve more people with paralyzed budgets.” Federal aid, a new element in the financial mix, was both important and insufficient.<sup>36</sup>

As the Depression eased in the middle 1930s, or appeared to ease, hope sprung anew among the communities of the book. Towns such as Wilson and Burlington breathed new life into the growth of public libraries. In Wilson’s not atypical case, a woman’s club library became a public library and employed in 1939 a professional librarian for the first time.<sup>37</sup>

A major development with implications for the future was legislative permission in 1933 to create regional (multi-county) libraries. By 1940 half (51%) of the state had access to a public library.<sup>38</sup> Book stock and circulation statewide were 940,877 and 5,992,548 compared to 435,142 and 2,942,871 in 1930. This represented more than a twofold in both categories. North Carolina public libraries had .26 books per person versus .14 and a circulation of 1.68 per capita versus .93 in 1940 and 1930 respectively. The community of the book was slowly gaining strength despite the Depression but remained quite weak by national standards.

State Librarian H. Marjorie Beal undertook a major assessment of public libraries in 1948.<sup>39</sup> The number of libraries had increased greatly since the early years of the century, and in theory public library service now reached 92% of the population. Direct state assistance to public libraries, which began with very modest amounts in 1941, spurred counties and regions to establish and expand library service. The public in 1948 had access to 1,585,730 books, or .48 books per person and a circulation of two books per capita. There were 93 professional librarians (87 white and 6 black). However, only half the African Americans received public library service. Separate (but hardly equal) black libraries held 144,031 books, or .15 books per African American.<sup>40</sup> Even so, this was the best record in the South.<sup>41</sup> On the relative status of black education in North Carolina versus other Southern states, see James N. Padgett, “From Slavery to Prominence in North Carolina,” Journal of Negro History XXII, 4 (October 1937): 445-446, 457. Atlanta ignored a Carnegie grant for a black branch and did not have library service for African Americans until 1921.

The history of library services to African Americans in North Carolina has been only tentatively explored to date. The community of the book, so important in the acculturation of

immigrant new Americans in northern cities, apparently played a lesser role among Southern blacks.<sup>42</sup> The library as a democratic forum for learning and communication hardly existed for African Americans. No library gave them equal access to books. The most vigorous expression of service was in Charlotte which opened in 1906 what may be the first real black public library in the South.<sup>43</sup> Durham followed suit in 1916, Laurinburg in 1918, Wilmington in 1926, and Raleigh in 1939, with Durham and Hertford Counties pioneering in bookmobile service to blacks.<sup>44</sup>

Two [white] public librarians attended the inaugural meeting of the North Carolina Negro Library Association in 1934, and a library school for blacks opened in Durham in 1941.

By 1940 eleven of twenty county libraries provided “Service for Negroes,” twelve of sixty municipal libraries, and none of the twenty-one association libraries. During World War II African American soldiers enjoyed some library service, at least at Camp Sutton.<sup>45</sup> Between 1948, when Beal determinedly focused attention on the problem, and 1950 fifteen counties added Negro library service. In the 1950s there was further if slow progress. For example, a black school supervisor started a library in Williamston in 1953 with \$1,000 from the county.<sup>46</sup> Public libraries began to integrate during the early 1960s.<sup>47</sup>

In 1960 there were ninety-two public library systems, most with branches, covering some 97% of North Carolina. They possessed 3,679,531 books or .83 per capita and circulated 12,828,574 books at a cost of \$3,363,000 or \$.74 per person. If this seems modest, it is, but it also represents almost three books being circulated for each resident—three books and whatever reference and information services which would not have occurred without public libraries.

By the 1960s, then, there was a reliable if underfunded network of library service throughout the state which included not just main libraries but also branches and bookmobiles.<sup>48</sup> In theory practically everyone had access to a public library. The material basis of a library-oriented community of the book was therefore laid in the difficult sixty years from the beginning of the century. Libraries, to return to the vocabulary used by Habermas, provided a possible if not thriving public forum for communication and democratic progress.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Louis R. Wilson, "The Growth of the Libraries ..." World's Work 14 (May-October 1907): 8985. Foreigners had a different perspective, and one student has observed that public libraries in the United States had by 1900 "become powerful institutions [engaged] in diverse activities." Jean Hassenforder, Developement comparé des bibliothèques publiques en France, en Grande-Bretagne et aux États-Unis dans la seconde moitié du XIX siècle (1850-1914) (Paris: Cercle de la Librairie, 1967), 193. For French libraries, consult Graham Keith Barnett, "La léthargie des bibliothèques municipales," Histoire des bibliothèques françaises, Martine Pulain, ed., vol. V: Les bibliothèques au XXe siècle, 1914-1990 (Paris: Éditions du Cercle de la Librairie, 1992), 53-81. For was, See May V. Crenshaw, "Public Libraries in the South," Library Journal 42 (1917): 163, for lingering Southern confusion about what constituted a "public library."

<sup>2</sup> See the series by Barbara Beeland Rehder, "Development of Libraries in the Lower Cape Fear," Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, (1964-1966),

<sup>3</sup> For Americans seminal works on the history of books include Robert Darnton's "What Is the History of Books?" reprinted in his The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 107-135; and David D. Hall, "The History of the Book: New Questions? New Answers?," reprinted in Libraries, Books & Culture, ed. Donald G. Davis, Jr. (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1986), 27-38. See also Robert V. Williams, "Theoretical Issues and Constructs Underlying the Study of Library Development," Libri 34 (1984): 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> Some accounts based on Northern and urban areas suggest a more positive appraisal. Consult Joseph Rosenblum, A Bibliographic History of the Book: An Annotated Guide to the Literature (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 1995). The community of the book encompasses of course more than public libraries and more than libraries. Research is needed on the productivity and incidence of printers and booksellers as well as literary and literacy, discussion and writing groups in the South and elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> For Habermas, only through "communicative action" can democratic attributes and social solidarity be imparted to institutions and persons. Within the context of his theory of democratic communication, the public library is, as economists would say, a positive good. Since libraries play an important role in modern communications, librarians should be particularly interested in Habermas. Because of space limitations we must leave aside the discussion of the relevance of Habermas' ideas to libraries. See Habermas The Theory of Communicative Action (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), I, 397, and II, 60-61. Cf. also Patrick Wilson, Public Knowledge, Private Ignorance: Toward a Library and Information Policy (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), for an exploration of some of these themes within a library context. Interpretation of Habermas has assumed the size of a cottage industry. Anthony Giddens, "Jürgen Habermas," The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences, ed. Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 121-139; Frederick A. Olafson, "Habermas as a Philosopher," Ethics (April 1990): 641-657; and Thomas McCarthy, "Translator's Introduction," Theory of Communicative Action, I, vii-xxxix, are good introductions. For our purposes in this paper, see Mark E. Warren, "The Self in Discursive Democracy," The Cambridge Companion to Habermas, ed. Stephen K. White (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 167-200.

<sup>6</sup> A generation or two of revisionists have tried to disabuse or modify greatly the notion of libraries as "arsenals of democracy" -- with appreciable results. Nonetheless, the public service orientation and openness of libraries provide a continuing basis for their democratic as well as practical utility.

<sup>7</sup> Louis R. Wilson, The Geography of Reading: A Study of the Distribution and Status of Libraries in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), esp. 184-188, 434-435, fully illustrates the connection between library development, community resources and living standards. The case for the historical significance of public libraries is ably stated in Frank Woodford, Journal of Library History 1/1 (1966): 34-41. For more extensive documentation of how resources -- economic, social and cultural -- have been mobilized for the growth of public libraries in North Carolina than can be presented here, see Patrick M. Valentine, "The Struggle to Establish Public Library Service in Wilson, North Carolina, 1900-1940," Libraries & Culture 28/3 (Summer 1993): 285-306; and "Steel, Cotton and Tobacco: Philanthropy and Public Libraries in North Carolina, 1900-1940," Libraries & Culture (Winter 1996--forthcoming)

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<sup>8</sup> James S. Brawley, The Rowan Story 1753-1953 (Salisbury: Rowan Printing, 1953), 289-290; Randolph P. Schaffner, Good Reading Material, Mostly Bound and New: The Hudson Library 1884-1994 (Highlands: Hudson Library of Highlands, Inc., 1994), 9-18; Wendell W. Smiley, "Library Development in North Carolina Before 1930," (Greenville: East Carolina University Library, 1971 [originally proposed as a dissertation in 1930/32]). (The State Library Commission, however, considered the founding date for the Hudson Library as 1915.)

<sup>9</sup> Mary Louis Stevenson, "The History of the New Bern-Craven County Public Library," (master's paper, East Carolina University, 1978), 6.

<sup>10</sup> On Franklin, see Kate Robinson to Louis Round Wilson, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, 3274, Louis Round Wilson papers, series V, folder 464, 1 March 1910 [cited hereafter as LRW]. Carnegie Corporation Public Library Correspondence, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Department, Microfilm Reel 67, Goldsboro, letter of Mrs. S. Weil, 31 March 1909. Mrs. Sol Weil founded the North Carolina Association of Jewish Women in 1921. Her children later gave their home to the library.

<sup>11</sup> Whether "plain folk" could or would use a club or subscription library is open to question. I. A. Newby, Plain Folk in the New South: Social Change and Cultural Persistence 1880-1915 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 419-420, 443; Deanna B. Marcum, Good Books in a Country Home: The Public Library as Cultural Force in Hagerstown, Maryland, 1878-1920 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 129. Candid reports of the quality of town libraries during this period can be found in Minnie W. Leatherman's reports to the North Carolina Library Commission, LRW, folders 505-513.

<sup>12</sup> In 1900 North Carolina supposedly had 57 libraries with 285,000 books, which amounts to .15 books per North Carolinian, but most of these were college libraries and the quality and relevance of the books to the public can be doubted. Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1899-1900 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), I, 928-931.

<sup>13</sup> Unsigned letter by the librarian, 23 April 1903, Durham County Public Library Archives, Box 1, Correspondence 1897-1911; Leatherman to Wilson, LRW, V, 505, 5 February 1910.

<sup>14</sup> All library statistics are from the biennial or annual reports of the NCLC, variously titled, starting with First Biennial Report of the North Carolina Library Commission, 1909-1910 (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1910). (Griggs was Secretary and Director of the NCLC from 1924 to 1930. North Carolina Department of Archives and History [cited hereafter as NCDAH], 62.9, NCLC Administrative Section, minutes, meetings of 1 November 1923 and 24 March 1930 [cited hereafter as NCLC Archives]. See also Betty Young, "Lillian Baker Griggs," Dictionary of American Library Biography, ed. Bohdan S. Wynar (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1978), 220-221.)

<sup>15</sup> See Griggs, "The Memoirs of Mrs. Alfred (Lillian B.) Griggs," Duke University Archives (manuscript, 1940), 52: when asking for money for county service before the County Commissioners, "tears began to roll down my cheeks and I believe the audience was affected enough to have given us the \$600" instead of the \$400 library trustees had asked for.

<sup>16</sup> Raleigh as a whole had nine libraries, six of them college or academy, plus the State Library, the State School for the Blind library, and the Supreme Court library. The State Library had half of the 80,600 volumes reported in Raleigh and the Supreme Court one-quarter. (These statistics should not be considered exact. A couple reports were clearly estimates and two libraries did not report any volumes, while North Carolina State College was not listed.)

<sup>17</sup> Fayetteville, too, had a tradition of library service in the nineteenth century. See "Fay.-Library" files at Cumberland County Public Library.

<sup>18</sup> A club library opened in 1904 was supposedly free of charge to the public after 1907. (Greenville) Daily Reflector, 17 October 1930 and 11 February 1950. But compare LRW, V, 514, Monthly Report of the Secretary, June 10-July 10 (1910): "This little library is entirely under the control of three book clubs, consisting of 20 members each and seems to be patronized almost exclusively by the members." See also East Carolina University, Joyner Library Manuscripts, 150.1 and 150.6, End of the Century Book Club papers. Thirty-one of forty-eight club meetings between October 1902 and October 1906 were devoted to the library. The city did not assume control



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from the Woman's Club until 1928.

<sup>19</sup> See Valentine, "Steel, Cotton and Tobacco," n. 93.

<sup>20</sup> Dates given are those listed in First Biennial Report... 1909-1910. Several libraries did not send in statistics, while Ledger with a population of 52 claimed 12,000 books. These statistics do not include libraries which had ceased operating by 1909, such as Wilson's, or so others such as Kinston and Lincolnton which claimed to be opened by 1908 but sent in no report.

<sup>21</sup> For a brief introduction, see Robert Sidney Martin, "The Gospel of Education: Louis Round Wilson and Library Development," North Carolina Libraries 50/1 (Spring 1992): 22-25; and Jesse H. Shera, "Wilson, Louis Round (1876-1979)," Supplement to the Dictionary of American Library Biography, ed. Wayne A. Wiegand (Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1990), 156-163.

<sup>22</sup> Dr. Charles D. McIver, president of North Carolina Normal College at Greensboro and a renown proponent of education, was also active in the formation of NCLA. See NCDAH, NCLA Archives, 1, 1-8, 67-69, and "The North Carolina Library Association, Organized May, 1904," (booklet, n.d. [1909 or 1910], bound at p. 31); Louis R. Wilson, "The North Carolina Library Association, 1904-1909," North Carolina Libraries 13 (November 1954): 2-7.

<sup>23</sup> Anne Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), and "Women and Libraries," Libraries, Books & Culture, 400-405; James V. Carmichael, Jr., "Atlanta's Female Librarians, 1883-1915," ibid., 377-399; see also his "Southerners in the North and Northerners in the South..." in Women's Work: Vision and Change in Librarianship (University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science Occasional Paper 196, 1994), 27-104. The parallel role played by woman groups in Georgia has been studied in Cheryl Ann Karr, "A Preliminary Examination of the Involvement of Women's Clubs in the Establishment of Selected Public Libraries in Georgia, 1896-1920," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 1992). No comparable study has been done on North Carolina libraries but the crucial role of women in creating public libraries is indisputable in Aberdeen, Andrews, Durham, Edenton, Goldsboro, High Point, Johnston County, Kinston, Maxton, Mooresville, Morganton, Randolph County, Reidsville, Salisbury, Saluda, Swan Quarter, Tyrrell County, Washington, and Wilson (just to scan author's notes). In addition, the role of women is often obscured by a perceived need to have a man negotiate for them with public and private authorities.

<sup>24</sup> The LRW papers indicate that there was a fair amount of acrimony, glossed over in public, between the NCLC and the Federation. See also Thornton W. Mitchell, The State Library and Library Development in North Carolina (Raleigh: Division of State Library, 1983), 19-24; Joanne E. Passet, "Reaching the Rural Readers: Traveling Libraries in America, 1892-1920," Libraries & Culture 26/1 (Winter 1991): 100-118.

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte and Durham had separate libraries open for African Americans. Sanford did not indicate whether its library was free or subscription. Several of these libraries were located in small towns with many Northerner tourists, such as Niagara.

<sup>26</sup> Quotation, NCLC Archives, 62.9, 17 March 1921. (Palmer became Secretary and Director of NCLC in May 1919 with a salary of \$1,800 and left in December 1923 to get married.) Guilford extended county service in 1915, but Palmer argued that Charlotte, which had done so even earlier, had made a mistake in acting before the legislature approved the practice. NCLA Archives, "Address of Mr. E. P. Wharton ... November 11, 1921," and ensuing discussion, 2, 6, 18-23. See also North Carolina Library Bulletin 8/5 (1931), 79.

<sup>27</sup> LRW to Lillian B. Griggs, LRW, V, 516, 25 September 1928. See also Griggs, "Memoirs," 52. The push for higher standards was far different from earlier years when just the creation of a library was the rallying cry. See for instance, J. P. Breedlove's opening address at the eighth NCLA meeting (Washington, N.C., 5 November 1913): "Every town and village of North Carolina can have a public library ... even though the library be small and its growth slow." NCLA Archives, 1, 39. Breedlove was the Trinity College librarian and treasurer of NCLA.

<sup>28</sup> California expended \$1.08 per person and Massachusetts \$0.85. Even in 1932 the president of the Winston-Salem Board of Trustees considered county contributions merely a way of reducing city appropriations. Tommie Dora Barker, American Library Association Library Extension Board, Regional Field Agent for the South, Field Notes, 15-21 November 1932 [cited hereafter as ALA Field Notes; I am indebted to Dr. James V. Carmichael,

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Jr., for copies of these Notes.]. Cf. Paul S. Ballance, comp., The First Fifty Years of Public Library Service in Winston-Salem 1906-1956 (Winston-Salem: Public Library of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, 1956?), 26-27.

<sup>29</sup> Salem had 42,000 inhabitants, the seven North Carolina cities 222,607. All North Carolina colleges together added 25,479 new books in 1922, while the University of California by itself accessioned 25,984. Wilson's article was first printed in the University newsletter and in one form or another was widely disseminated and discussed. Cf. Louis R. Wilson, "The Use of Books and Libraries in North Carolina," Journal of Social Forces, I/2 (January 1923): 86; and "Library Development in North Carolina," Library Journal (1 January 1923): 21-26. For Wilson's use of Salem and comparative statistics, see Robert Sidney Martin, "Louis Round Wilson's *Geography of Reading*: A Inquiry into Its Origins, Development, and Impact," Libraries, Books & Culture, 425-444, esp. 427-428.

<sup>30</sup> Quotation, Griggs to Mrs. R. L. Carr, 25 September 1930, Griggs papers, Duke University Special Collections. See also Marjorie Beal, "The Citizens Library Movement," typescript, 6 March 1936, and letters by Graham in NCLC Archives, 62.13, Box 1; William Eury, "The Citizens' Library Movement in North Carolina," (bachelor's thesis, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1951); Warren Ashby, Frank Porter Graham: A Southern Liberal (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1980), 66-68; Griggs to Anne Pierce, 516, 25 October 1929; and Griggs to Wilson, 517, 1 April 1930, LRW, V.

<sup>31</sup> Gov. O. Max Gardner, "The Significance of the Citizens' Library Movement," (Chapel Hill?: North Carolina Library Association, 1929). Governor Clyde R. Hoey, at a CLM meeting in Charlotte, 26 March 1938, declared "I believe the extension of adequate library facilities into the rural communities will do much toward advancing the interests of North Carolina." Cited, Fifteenth Report of the North Carolina Library Commission, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Only twelve counties contributed as much as \$1,000 annually to their libraries in 1936, so most of these libraries were municipal no matter what their official title. One, in Oteen, was a Veteran's Library.

<sup>33</sup> Floyd W. Price, Jr., "A History of the Northampton Library, Northampton County, N. C., 1934-1966," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1981), 12; Richard H. Thornton, The Richard H. Thornton Library (Oxford: Richard H. Thornton Library, 1975), 15-19. William S. Powell, "Citizens' Library Movement in North Carolina," North Carolina Libraries 13/1 (November 1954): 34, is probably incorrect in citing Goldsboro, Greenville and Nash County as libraries influenced by the CLM. The CLM did have a direct impact on the Mebane gift in Rockingham County.

<sup>34</sup> On social services in the South, see William A. Link, The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); George Brown Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); and Dewey Grantham, The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds (New York: HarperCollins, 1994). The best general state history is William S. Powell, North Carolina Through Four Centuries (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

<sup>35</sup> ALA-Field Notes, 23-29 September 1932; Frank Graham to Wilson, 15 July 1930, LRW, IV, 320. Upon his return, Wilson worked strenuously against a proposed 10% salary cut. As Griggs wrote to Beal, "Librarians did not enjoy high salaries ... during prosperous days and I think to reduce them now would be a mistake." Griggs to Beal, 24 January 1931, Griggs papers; see also Wilson to Griggs, 19 January 1931; Griggs to Wilson, 21 January 1931.

<sup>36</sup> Quotation, Elizabeth H. Hughey, "Public Libraries in North Carolina," North Carolina Libraries 13/1 (November 1954): 15. James V. Carmichael, Jr., "North Carolina Libraries Face the Depression: A Regional Field Agent and the 'Bell Cow' State, 1930-36," ibid., 50/1 (Spring 1992), 35-40. Federal aid to North Carolina in 1940-41 amounted to \$790,810, the seventh highest total in the United States. Edward Barrett Stanford, Library Extension Under the WPA (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 62, Table 6. See also Richard Sylla, "Long-Term Trends in State and Local Finance: Sources and Uses of Funds in North Carolina, 1800-1977," in Stanley Engerman and Robert C. Gallman, eds., Long-Term Factors in American Economic Growth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 827 and 837.

<sup>37</sup> Local attorney Luke Lamb called the library a "democratic university." Wilson Daily Times, 15 February 1937.

<sup>38</sup> The true statistic was smaller as blacks had little or no access in most counties. In addition, as a result of Supreme Court rulings that "A public library is not a necessary expense" and the failure of a local library tax levy, the Charlotte Public Library closed from 30 June 1939 to 1 July 1940. Mitchell, State Library, 57; Patricia Ryckman, Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County: A Century of Service (Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1989), 15-16.

<sup>39</sup> Marjorie Beal, ed., "Libraries in North Carolina: A Survey, 1946-1947," (Raleigh: NCLA, 1948). Beal succeeded Griggs as NCLC Director in June 1930, at \$3,500 a year.

<sup>40</sup> Beal fought successfully for greater resources for black North Carolinians. She added Mollie Huston Lee, who was librarian of the Richard B. Harrison Library in Raleigh and had worked part time for the State Library for years, to her staff in 1946 as Negro Supervisor of Rural Libraries.

<sup>41</sup> The capitals of the neighboring states of Virginia and South Carolina, for instance, did not open libraries until 1924, at least in part because of fear of black involvement. Carolyn H. Leatherman, "Richmond Considers a Free Public Library," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 96/2 (April 1988), 181-192. Dorothy D. Wilson, "The History of Richland County Public Library," (typescript, 1967, "RCPL-misc." file at Richland County Public Library).

<sup>42</sup> Libraries receive little or no attention in the surveys analyzed by John R. Larkins, in Patterns of Leadership Among Negroes in North Carolina (Raleigh: Irving-Swain Press, n.d. [1959]; or in Willard B. Gatewood, Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). See also John R. Larkins, "The Negro Population of North Carolina, Social and Economic," Special Bulletin Number 23 (Raleigh: North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, 1944). One thinks, however, of Richard Wright using a white man's library card to educate himself. Black Boy (New York: Harper & Row, 1945 ed.), 267-273. On European American immigrants, see Rosemary Ruhig Du Mont, Reform and Reaction: The Big City Public Library in American Life (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 98-104, 136-137; and Phyllis Dain, The New York Public Library (New York: New York Public Library, 1972), 28-29, 288-294. The most comprehensive study is Plummer Alston Jones, "American Public Library Service to the Immigrant Community: 1876-1948..." (dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1991).

<sup>43</sup> Memphis had a branch for blacks in a "colored normal school" in 1904 and Galveston in January 1905 had a branch in a high school but "Charlotte, N. C. is the first and only city to build a library for Negroes with its own funds." William F. Yust, "What of the Black and Yellow Races?" Bulletin of the American Library Association (July 1913), 159-167, quotation 162; and Eliza Atkins Gleason, The Southern Negro and the Public Library (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), 20-22. See also Tommie Dora Barker, Libraries of the South: A Report on Developments 1930-1935 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1936), 50. For documentation on Durham, Asheville, Charlotte, Greensboro, and Davidson County, see Valentine, "Steel, Cotton and Tobacco," n. 37-40, 53, 57, 66-70, 82-84, 142, 145, and 148.

<sup>44</sup> Mollie Huston Lee, "Development of Negro Libraries in North Carolina," North Carolina Libraries 3/2 (May 1944): 3. A volunteer library opened in Wilson in January 1943 and the next year both the city and county began contributing funds. Doretta Davis Anderson, "A History of Public Library Service to Blacks in Wilson, North Carolina," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976), 17-19. As early as 1912 noted educator Charles Lee Coon had called for public library service for blacks in Wilson. Southern Historical Collection, 177, Charles Lee Coon papers, 94, "Articles of Association," [Negro Branch] Social Services League of Wilson, 22 May 1922.

<sup>45</sup> Kathryn M. Penn, "Reading Interests of Soldiers," North Carolina Libraries 3/2 (May 1944): 12.

<sup>46</sup> "Mary S. Gray Library a favorite of W'mston Children," (Williamston) Enterprise, 22 May 1984. See also Williamston Library files in the Martin Memorial Library; and Francis M. Manning and W. H. Booker, Martin County History (Williamston: Enterprise Publishing, 1977), I, 280.

<sup>47</sup> Capus M. Waynick, et al., ed., North Carolina and the Negro (Raleigh: North Carolina Mayors' Co-operating Committee, 1964), passim. See also A. P. Marshall, "Service to Afro-Americans," A Century of Service: Librarianship in the United States and Canada, ed. Sidney L. Jackson et al. (Chicago: American Library

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Association, 1976), 72-75; Eric Moon and Karl Nyren, Library Issues: The Sixties (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1970), 117-150. Although it would take decades of intense struggle and anguish, blood and tears, "the tiny hairline cracks" that would split the hard "surface of segregation" were already appearing and spreading in the early post-war years. John Egerton, Speak Now Against the Day (New York: Knopf, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> On funding, see for example the lead editorial "Shortchanging the Libraries," Twin City Sentinel, 20 April 1967.